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I am writing to wholeheartedly **OBJECT** to the proposed McPhillamy Gold project **SSD-9505**.

We are currently living through one of the driest periods in NSW ever documented. Towns are running out of water, people are leaving farms as they have no access to water, and yet here we are fighting to keep the main natural water system for our community and preventing it from being used and contaminated by a mine. This project is claiming to bring benefits to our community, but how will we have a community once our lifeblood has gone? Do these 'benefits' outweigh the destruction and degradation of our water? Is gold more important than water?

I believe this project from not only a residential point of view but from a business point of view will have untold, irreparable, and irreversible damage not only to our environment but to our community as a whole.

I would ask for the following questions to be answered as our attempts to gain these answers directly from Regis have proved impossible and has become somewhat frustrating.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Unfortunately one of our major concerns is the lack of communication with Regis. At the end of July 2018 we arranged to have a meeting at the Regis office in Blayney with Tony McPaul. During that meeting we were concerned with the issues surrounding the Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) which had just been released. These concerns for us as landholders on the river were around the placement of the tailings storage facility (TSF). We met again the following week, this time with Rod Smith present and again voiced our concerns over the tailings dam position and the potential content of the tailings dam. We were told our issues were of **high priority** to the Regis group and that they would be in touch with us and organise further explanation and communication. That is the last we heard of Regis until they had their first open day to which we attended. We also went to the second open day and these were the only two times we spoke with Regis, which were obviously instigated by us having to go and see them. This is extremely frustrating that at our initial meetings with them they said we were a high priority to them and we were waiting for some sort of a reply.

During the second open day we became quite concerned with the development surrounding the tailings dam and river system and it was only when raised voices were used that Regis decided to come back to us with offers to come to our property and test water quality. This was only two weeks prior to the EIS being released and we questioned Regis as to the relevance of doing such a small amount of testing in such a short amount of time. **Where were they when they could have had 12 months of baseline data at least to work from?**

Water quality is not the issue (as this is what they wanted to test for) and is not what needs to be measured for this mine development. River flow data needed to have been collected since Regis started looking at this area to mine. If they had, this would have included the 2016 wet winter we entailed where river flats flooded for weeks on end. They have only done a minimal amount of water testing and this has been during one of the driest periods on history in this area. I would like to add that basing their data on

modelling and historical events is not only lazy but a very convenient way of presenting results they might find favourable to the company.

As mentioned, we are very dissatisfied with Regis' communications. On page 172 of Appendix T it states that during "*the EIS exhibition Regis will offer to meet with downstream landholders to discuss the EIS findings.*" During the whole exhibition period Regis never came forward to our family to discuss the EIS findings. They did hold an open day but we were required to go to them. This has been a resounding theme throughout the last year and a half where it has taken landholders to have to go and speak with Regis rather than Regis coming to speak with us. They have failed to live up to their requirements as stated in the EIS and again have let the community down.

## **WATER**

It has been quite baffling to attend three Regis open days where we have spoken to experts in relation to water. We live and work on the river and understand the springs as best we can however even generations of farming on the river has proven that even we do not know exactly understand how the springs work. Regis has come in the last few years, employed experts who seem to be able to tell us exactly how the Springs will react and move once a tailings dam has been placed over the top of them. One thing we do know is the springs rise and fall at different times of the year and not only due to rainfall. Sometimes the springs rise in times prior to rain events. We also know that the every single one of the springs plays a vital role in this river system. Each spring feeds the river at sometime or at some point and plays a vital role in keeping the river system charged and also keeping the ecosystem healthy from the very headwaters of the river right through to the Carcoar dam.

No amount of modelling will ever be able to definitively show how the springs are going to react once the mine starts tampering with this natural system. The EIS has stated that t seepage from the tailings storage facility will eventually seep into the river. Therefore we have 100% chance that our river will never be the same once this tailings dam is placed over the top. The environmental impact on this will be irreversible and most damaging to those not only people but also animals and vegetation that rely on the river to survive.

## **PIPELINE WATER FROM LITHGOW**

The proposed pipeline water coming to Blayney from Lithgow for the purposes of mine use is raising a number of questions and on page 46 of the pipe line water appendix it states that the water will be suitable for sheep and beef cattle use, however it also stated only for limited periods.

**This is interesting and I would like to know how long sheep and beef cattle are able to drink this saline water and has Regis checked with authorities such as Meat and Livestock Authority just to name one, as to whether this would be acceptable when selling cattle?**

We have very strict and stringent quality assurance guidelines which does not allow any contamination of any sort, of our stock .We also would lose our option to be chemical free grass fed cattle and sheep producers at a sale level because of this contamination. What research has Regis done to find out if this is acceptable, apart from the very broad statement quoted from the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries fact sheet?

**It would also be interesting to know whether Regis could explain that if landholders in the surrounding area do not want this water what will they do if this happens once the mine closes? Will this water stop being pumped to Blayney? Will it stay in Lithgow? Or will Blayney be the dumping ground for this toxic water waste?**

This water which was of major concern once contaminating the Cox's River also has many issues for us. Research done on the rivers and surrounding waterways showed there was high to very high electrical conductivity or salinity levels. Examples include Eight (8) of the thirteen (13) sites that were monitored in 2007 in the Cox's River catchment exceeded the SCA Trigger Value of 300 EC for salinity. Eight (8) of the thirteen (13) sites exceeded the 800 EC ADWG and WHO upper limit for drinking water quality. Three (3) of the thirteen (13) sites currently exceeded the <1500 EC requirement for avoiding adverse biological impacts on rivers, streams and wetland ecosystems.

It is also well documented that this water which was being previously pumped straight into the Cox's River was tested thoroughly at different points. Not only was it found that the water was unsuitable but also found high levels of **heavy metals including copper, boron, aluminium and arsenic.**

**So the question once again is why as clean beef and sheep producers in the Central West with an impeccable record of producing high-quality safe meat would want to or indeed see this as an advantage having this water available to us which is contaminated and something we would avoid at all costs to ensure our quality standards and reputation are kept?**

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

The social impact report appendix T generally summarises mental health on page 172. The mental health effects are a lot more extreme now that the EIS is out, than when Hansen and Bailey conducted their focus groups last year, 2018. It does touch on some of the issues that people were being affected by however, these have now been exacerbated since the EIS has been out on exhibition.

Some examples that I can provide, that our personal mental health has been affected and greatly increased within the last 12 months include:

- Increased stress due to working on this mine issue instead of our own businesses.
- Increase disconnection from our children due to often upsetting conversations around the mine and not spending more quality time with our kids.
- Increased anxiety from our children due to their understanding of the future and listening to what is potentially going to affect them.
- Increase anxiety's due to community divide surrounding the mine. This is huge in small towns.
- Lower mood levels based on the possibility that the mine will go ahead.
- Severely increased stress due to the possibility that our business won't be profitable if the project goes ahead
- Increased stress around the possibility that our land values will decrease due to proximity of the mine and the Belubula river.
- Added pressure of the impact of the drought and the added water security issues potentially being impacted on us by the mine, not only short, but also long term.

## **MINE LIFE**

**Where is the assurance from Regis that this is only a 10 to 15 year mine?** Even though this has been stated throughout the EIS and particularly on page 18 of appendix T in the project schedule that *"the EIS refers to project years rather than Calendar years it should be noted that mining schedules could vary accordingly as they are subject to continual revision based on changing mining and market conditions and timing."*

This to me gives Regis the excuse they need to draw out their mine life in our community. Say for instance the price of gold drops and it is not economical for Regis to mine, they

could temporarily stop mining until gold prices increase. This is unacceptable as even the CEO of Regis claimed at the recent Open Day that they will only be here for 10 to 15 years. We need these assurances on paper without any exceptions.

### **HAZARDS TO MIDWESTERN HIGHWAY**

From my research I cannot find anywhere in the EIS where it deals with the potential fly rock being thrown onto the mid Western Highway and threatening motorists from explosions in the open cut pit. In page 13 of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment it states that *"the applicant would also ensure that the risk of fly rock is minimised and does not pose a threat to the mid Western Highway"*. **I would like to ask Regis where abouts in the EIS they have answered these questions in regards to fly rock and how they are going to minimise it?** There is no waste rock dump in front of the pit and the pit is extremely close to the highway. **How are they intending to protect travellers?** Ensuring that they are minimising the risk of fly rock is in fact stating that there will be an issue. **What is Regis doing exactly to completely stop this from occurring?**

### **ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE?**

It is clear after reading many parts of the EIS, Regis Resources is only interested in extracting the gold from Kings Plains the most economically way beneficial to them. As a business person I can understand this thinking however when I run my business I'm also aware of how this will affect the environment. With latest research showing that the CSIRO are in fact proving that gold can be extracted a lot more cleaner and greener, I cannot understand why the company would not be looking at this as an option. In regards to the tailings storage facility, it was also stated that it was placed in its current position because it was the most economical to do so (this was told directly to us by Tony McPaul and Rod Smith in our initial meetings in 2018). Economics should not always be the driving force when you are conducting such a volatile and environmentally sensitive project and it would seem to me that if they were trying to be a responsible mining company they would also look at the best way to preserve the environment they are exploiting. Building a tailings dam over the top of river systems is not an environmentally responsible act. Even when it is the cheapest. There are other options for that tailings dam facility and if they were environmentally conscious they would be exploring those other avenues even if it was to cost more. **SO my question is why hasn't Regis explored other more environmentally conscious options for extracting and producing the gold, and storing of toxic tailings?**

### **ECONOMIC BENEFIT**

There does not seem to be any economic benefit coming to our area. Regis has claimed that there is huge economic benefit having this mine come to Blayney. Regis has shown themselves in the EIS that during operations phase there will actually only be 65 jobs within the Blayney LGA (local hire) and 20 from further afield (Non Local Hire). How in anyone's mind is this an economical benefit to our community when the jobs that will go because the mine, are going to far outweigh the jobs that are gained? For instance the Beekeepers Inn currently employs 40 people and as they are very closely located to the mine, their business will cease to exist if this mine goes ahead, not only because of their tourism and wedding function business and cafe but the bees will not be able to survive in such a toxic area. This is the largest apiary in Australia. I would also argue that many landholders around the district will also look at moving as the potential land value decreases will affect their business and they will be looking to move out. Also the vast amount of agricultural land at Regis has bought has stopped any agricultural business on that 8000 acres, which not only brought money to the area through cattle and sheep

production but also contract work through fencing spreading fertiliser, cropping etc. Another issue with supposed economic benefits is that having such a low unemployment rate in our local government area the mine will be drawing from our existing workforce. These are people that already have good jobs in the town and surrounding area and they will be moving out of these jobs to move to the mine as the pay would obviously be much higher. It will be very hard to fill those positions and as a result we could see an inflation of prices for services and longer waiting times to have those services provided. This to me is not an economic benefit to this community at all.

## **CONCLUSION**

How much longer are we going to exploit the thousands of acres of prime agricultural fertile land which feeds and sustains this country, for the few greedy people who benefit from this gold.